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TAGS: [CUETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY AND CUBA: NSC-DIRECTED REVIEW FOR LIBERTAD

TITLE III SUSPENSION

REF: A. STATE 57782

[1](#)B. ROME 3918

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor David D. Pearce for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. There have been few developments in Italy's relationship with Cuba in the past six months. Italy supported the EU's condemnation of recent acts of repudiation and subsequent demarches to the GOC, including protesting the harassment of dissident Martha Beatriz Roque. Italy did not vote for Cuban membership on the UN Human Rights Council. The Italian Embassy in Havana continued its "intensified dialogue" with civil society, which included regular meetings with opposition leaders at the ambassador and political counselor level. Italy did not participate in exchange programs with Cuba. The GOI continued to be frustrated by the worsening of the situation in Cuba and Havana's unwillingness to open a dialogue. Small Italian businesses operating in Cuba continued to experience serious problems as a result of recentralization, which the EU condemned. Overall investment with Cuba was down. Embassy Rome recommends the continuation of Italy's waiver under Title III as important to helping Italy maintain positions critical of the GOC. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Poloff met with Paolo Miraglia, MFA Office Director for Central America and the Caribbean, May 16 to discuss Italian policy towards Cuba and any recent developments as per ref tel A request.

[1](#)3. (C) Miraglia reported very little activity in Italy's relations with Cuba since November and noted that there have been no bilateral visits or political encounters with the GOC. As in November (ref tel B), Miraglia expressed concern with the deterioration of the human rights situation in Cuba and the trend to recentralization. Italy, as part of the EU, publicly condemned the acts of repudiation against civil society activists, including harassment of dissident leader Martha Beatriz Roque. The EU also expressed these concerns in demarches to the GOC. Italy did not vote for Cuba in the first-ever UN Human Rights Council elections because of the GOC's poor human rights record. The Italian Embassy in Havana continued to meet with members of civil society on a regular basis at the ambassador and political counselor level as part of the EU policy of intensified dialogue. The GOI did not participate in any exchanges with Cuba: there were no Italian student recipients of Cuban scholarships, Italy did not receive GOC-financed doctors, nor had Italian doctors traveled to Cuba for training.

¶4. (C) As in November, Miraglia noted that Italy was very pessimistic about the situation in Cuba, which showed no signs of improvement. Lack of openings from Havana, or reciprocity to the EU's revised policy, had frustrated the EU, according to Miraglia. Although the GOC continued to deny recognition to the EU common policy, Miraglia emphasized that sanctions have not worked. He noted that there would most likely not be any radical changes to the EU common policy at the June review. However, Miraglia thought there might be some realignment. The Italian position is not yet clear--a new government is taking office this week and will review the GOI Cuba position before the June EU meeting.

¶5. (C) Investment by Italian firms in Cuba, and overall trade, continued to decline over the past six months, according to Miraglia. Small companies experienced legal problems related to recentralization initiatives by the GOC, which the EU condemned. With no new Italian investment on the island, overall numbers were down. There were no business missions to Cuba during this time period.

¶6. (C) Comment. Italy is in the process of transitioning to a new national government, headed by Prime Minister Romano Prodi. It is not yet clear what the GOI approach will be in June: newly named Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema has yet to arrive at the MFA. However, there is clearly some frustration with the GOC's regressive policies and lack of engagement. Embassy Rome recommends the continuation of Italy's waiver under Title III as important to helping Italy maintain positions critical of the GOC. End comment.
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